

Trends and Facts on Newspapers | Pew Research Center

By Pew Research Center

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Pew's Newspapers Fact Sheet is part of its annual [State of the News Media](#) report which identifies trends about key sectors of the U.S. news media industry. This fact sheet, published in June 2018, focuses on print and digital newspaper organizations for 2017.

The estimated total U.S. daily newspaper circulation (print and digital combined) in 2017 was 31 million for weekday and 34 million for Sunday, down 11% and 10%, respectively, from the previous year. Declines were highest in print circulation: Weekday print circulation decreased 11% and Sunday circulation decreased 10%. (Note that in this fact sheet, and in the chart below, data through 2014 are from Editor & Publisher, which were published on the website of the News Media Alliance (NMA), known at the time as the Newspaper Association of America (NAA). Since then, the NMA/NAA no longer supplies these data, so the Center determined the year-over-year change in total circulation for those daily U.S. newspapers that report to the Alliance for Audited Media and meet certain criteria, as detailed in the note of the chart below. This percentage change was then applied to the total circulation from the prior year – thus the use of the term “estimated total circulation.”)

Digital circulation is more difficult to gauge. Three of the highest-circulation daily papers in the U.S. – The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post – have in recent years not fully reported their digital circulation to the Alliance for Audited Media (AAM), the group that audits the circulation figures of many of the largest North American newspapers and other publications. Two of these papers report such digital circulation elsewhere: The New York Times in their financial statements and The Wall Street Journal in reports available on the Dow Jones website. (The Washington Post does not fully report digital circulation in any forum.) But

because they may not be counted under the same rules used by AAM, these independently produced figures cannot easily be merged with the AAM data.

Taking these complexities into account, using the AAM data, digital circulation in 2017 was projected to have fallen, with weekday down 9% and Sunday also down 9%. According to the independently produced reports from The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, however, both companies saw large gains in digital circulation in the past year: 42% for the Times and 26% for the Journal, on top of gains in 2016. If these independently produced figures were included in both 2016 and 2017, weekday digital circulation would have risen by 10%.

This would also change the overall picture for combined print and digital circulation. Including the digital boost driven by these two large, national brands would still result in an overall drop in circulation year-over-year, but a smaller one: Overall weekday circulation would have fallen by 4% in 2017 rather than 11%.

Source: [Trends and Facts on Newspapers | State of the News Media | Pew Research Center](#)